

# The Riverfront Children's Center, Inc.

Education Committee Public Hearing  
March 1, 2017

SB 912 An Act Concerning Revisions to the Staff Qualifications Requirement for Early Childhood Educators.

Good morning Senator Slossberg, Senator Boucher, Representative Fleischmann, Representative Lavielle, my name is Susan Radway and I am the Director of Riverfront Children's Center and a member of the State Funded Centers Director's Forum, a statewide network of 103 child development centers serving over 4,000 infants, toddlers and three and four year old children. We are a critical component of the early care and education system in Connecticut and overall economy of the state.

I am submitting this testimony in support of several bills before you and offer recommendations to improve the stated intent of the proposed legislation.

## **Raised Bill 912, AAC Revisions to the Staff Qualifications Requirement for Early Childhood Educators.**

In sections B and C the language seeks to expand the teaching pool of qualified staff to include teachers graduating from regionally-accredited colleges. This would eliminate the added burden of an approval process through the Office of Early Childhood, which requires that the "program of studies" from the college be approved by the Office and go through a review process called ECTC or Early Childhood Teacher Credential. We support the intent of the language but the way it is currently written presents a barrier for teachers to meet the requirements.

## **We recommend you delete the following language from both sections:**

Section B "provided such associate degree program is approved by the Board of Regents for Higher Education or the Office of Higher Education and the Office of Early Childhood"

Section C "provided such bachelor's degree program is approved by the Board of Regents for Higher Education and the Office of Early Childhood."

Section B delete (III) of the proposed new language and retain the original language of PA 15-134 that states "such bachelor degree shall include a concentration in early childhood education, including, but not limited to early childhood education, child study, child development, or human growth and development"

Currently, only teachers graduating from ECTC approved Colleges are eligible to teach in publicly funded programs including infant toddler and preschool teachers. (PA 14-39) *Currently, there are only 14 approved ECTC-approved colleges in Connecticut, nine of which are for Associate's Degrees and four with Bachelor Degrees, with only one of these (UCONN) qualified to provide a degree for infant toddler teachers!*

This process limits the pool of qualified teachers and exacerbates the already difficult task of hiring teachers with a BA when compensation is stagnate and well below comparable positions in the public school system. *For example: If a teacher graduates*

*from St. Joseph's College with a Degree in Early Childhood, they would have to go through a review process in order to gain approval as an ECTC trained teacher. As a Director, I now have to tell a highly qualified person that I can only hire them on a conditional basis and at a lower wage until the approval is granted. Colleges with approved early childhood education degree programs have already met approved standards. Why are we asking our Office of Early Childhood to spend the time and money to vet graduates? By the time a decision has been made most have moved on to another career or another state!*

The state process is redundant and acts as a barrier for hiring qualified staff from prestigious colleges like Bank Street, Columbia, Wheelock or St. Joseph College and many more private and public institutions. The bill before you does nothing to address the crisis situation facing publicly funded centers. Regionally Accredited institutions of higher education meet high standards for course of study and many colleges go on to get NCATE/NAEYC approval. The ECTC process creates an unnecessary bureaucratic level to the early care and education system and does nothing to address the needs of teachers and programs in the real world.

State Funded Child Development Centers embrace high standards, teacher qualifications and all the components of a high quality system. Recent public policies promote investment in pre-K in the public sector: Alliance Districts, Smart Start, Charter Schools and Magnate Schools -vital investments. But without comparable financial support for child care centers to pay our teachers that provide full year, full day services to children birth to school age, the child care industry cannot compete with these free programs in the public school settings.

We ask that you review the current system for teacher approval and provide flexibility and a more streamlined approach to staff qualifications that opens up the pool of teachers rather than the current restrictive system in place. In addition, the CT Early Childhood Alliance is submitting full Bill language with recommended changes.

Thank you for your consideration.

Susan A. Radway Ed.D.

Executive Director